


What went wrong with Mr Right?



In any relationship there is a constant interaction of energies, and archetypes or opposing types of behaviour that often cause breakdown. Learning to understand what is causing friction can shift these dynamics and heal – but where do you start?

 'When we first moved in together I felt I'd at last found the relationship I'd been seeking my whole life,' said Glen. 'Carol and I had amazing fun together, and whereas I am an extrovert, her quiet shyness sort of balanced me. She is petite, almost frail, whereas I'm tall and more robust. She works regular office hours, and I'm a journalist for the local newspaper, so I often work night shifts, coming home in the

small hours of the morning. She nags me the whole time, though. I work hard, and deserve to relax and have fun even if I do sometimes go a bit overboard. I sometimes feel she doesn't really understand me. Before we met, I'd had lots of lovers, whereas this was only her second relationship. The opposites are numerous, but seemed to be the glue that attracted us to each other initially. Together we felt whole. But in the

last year or so, things just aren't what they used to be. I can feel she is often irritated with me and I seem to spend my life feeling bad about what I should or should not have done.'

Sound familiar?

So often in the early stages of a relationship we feel completed by the other person, only to find out that the very things we loved about them now irritate us. This is what Carol had to say: 'In the beginning I loved the way Glen would get me to loosen up and be more frivolous. His laid-back, outgoing, carefree manner appealed to my book-keeping orderliness. Now, however, I just find myself getting more and more irritated and frustrated with him. He truly doesn't care if there's a pile of dirty dishes in the sink and ignores the unmade bed, seldom even thinking about making it. The result is I end up picking and cleaning up after him, and I'm fed up with it. If I bring it up he laughs it off as my being too much of a perfectionist. I'm tired of him messing things up – he just won't learn! I don't think he is listening to what I'm telling him.'

DUALITY AND THE SEESAW

So who is wrong in this situation and who is right? Depending on your own nature you will probably leap to defend either Glen or Carol, and battle to understand how anybody could possibly think otherwise. There are, however, opposing types of behaviour or archetypes here. If they could understand what dynamics are at play, it would help them to heal the rift between them.

In a relationship with someone, there is a constant interaction of energies. What you do affects the other person, and vice versa. It's a sort of a dance where what one does causes the other to respond in a certain way.

You may think you are acting independently, but you are each pulling the other's energetic strings. It's a bit like being on a seesaw together. If the one person shifts position, the other will automatically be affected.

ARCHETYPES IN OPPOSITION

We (mostly) unconsciously act out these roles, often slipping into various different archetypes depending on the circumstances or the people we are with. Your reprimanding and controlling parent archetype most often emerges in response to your partner's withdrawn and sulky child archetype. Or when your partner is playing the role of extrovert, the chances are that you are quietly sitting in the introverted background. Much of the time we learn to tolerate each other's differences, but when we slip too far on the opposite ends of the see-saw, sparks usually fly, communication breaks down, or we slip into a hostile and resentful silence.

Irrespective of whether we are gay or straight, whenever two people are in a relationship, be it as lovers, friends or work colleagues, these archetypes can emerge.

WHAT ARCHETYPES ARE OCCURRING BETWEEN GLEN AND CAROL?

Not only are the 'slob' and the 'perfectionist' at play in Glen and Carol's relationship, the 'parent' and the 'child' are also opposing each other. Carol's use of phrases such as 'I don't think he is listening', and 'I'm tired of him messing things up – he just won't learn' are indications that she has assumed the role of the critical parent, while Glen is playing the rebellious child. Glen's use of words such as: 'I sometimes feel she doesn't really understand me', and 'I deserve to relax and have fun' (to excuse unacceptable behaviour) are typical of a rebel 'child' archetype. While at times being a nurturing 'parent' or a playful 'child' is healthy in a relationship,



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we do need to connect with our 'adult' if the relationship is to be mutually fulfilling. Who wants to always be a parent?

WHEN WILL HE/SHE CHANGE?

If only he/she would change, then I could be happy! This is a myth we live with, but the problem is why should your partner change, and if it's not beneficial to them in some way, why would they want to? In most cases you could wait a very long time.

To heal the relationship, Glen and Carol have to find the ability to transcend the need for their own behaviour to be acknowledged as right. Each should accept the other as he/she is – to reach in the place of intimacy, or into me see (and accept all that I am). In being able to communicate adult to adult,

they will lose the need to adopt the negative aspects of the 'parent' and 'child'. The same can be said for the other opposing archetypes of the 'slob' and 'perfectionist'.

So rather than wait for your partner to change, if you want the dynamics of a relationship to shift, you can start with yourself. It's harder in one sense, because blaming another person is a role we fall into far more easily (and besides, it's infinitely more attractive!). Ultimately it will cause frustration, however, and one has to accept that it's not the duty of any other person to fulfil us or make us happy. Only we can do this. If your Mr or Mrs Right appears to have gone wrong, it could help to look for what opposing archetypes could be causing friction and work to understand them. ●

ARCHETYPES IN OPPOSITION

Common archetypes found in relationships are:

- the parent/child
- the tyrant/victim
- the slob/perfectionist
- the priest/prostitute
- the miser/spendthrift
- the rescuer/princess.



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